

## **An Extended Power Outage, a Preparedness Reminder**

### **Check on Your Neighbors**

Do a check to make sure your neighbors are safe and have their needs met. If you go to a neighbor's house after dark, knock on the door and announce who you are.

### **Keep Your Emergency Contact Information Up To Date**

Update your Owner's Profile on our community web site so it accurately reflects the number adults, children and pets in residence in your home and any special needs that they may have. Update your phone number(s) eMail address and your out of town and emergency contact information

### **Seasonal Impact on Power Outages**

A summer power outage can be more dangerous in the desert because of the effects of high temperature causing dehydration and heat stroke. During a summer-time power outage, you will need to consume more water and have water available for cooling down your body with damp cloths.

Your home will heat up quickly, air conditioning will not be available. You may want to take a trip in your car or go to a movie during the day if the power outage is localized.

A winter power outage creates different risks such as dangers associated with the use of candles and fireplaces.

### **LED Flashlights – The Best Alternative for Emergency Lighting**

Have a number of flashlights with LED light bulbs and a supply of batteries. The reason for using LED (light emitting diode) flashlights is that they consume substantially less energy than a conventional flashlight bulb.

Incandescent flashlight bulbs break easily, burn out quickly and use up batteries fast. LED bulbs are almost impervious to shock, last 100,000 hours and extend the usable battery life by 10 times over a conventional light bulb. Replacement LED flashlight bulbs are available at Ace Hardware, Lowe's and Home Depot.



Also, you should consider having several 3 or 4 D-cell aluminum flashlights with LED bulbs similar to the ones that law enforcement and fire departments use (example shown above). These flashlights have high quality reflectors and focusable light patterns. Because they are

heavier than a plastic flashlight, they can be used to break glass for an emergency escape or used as a personal defense device. The most popular brand is MagLite®.

### **How to Obtain Maximum Interior Lighting**

The best way to gain maximum interior lighting is to place the flashlight on a table near the center of the room, pointing up at the ceiling with the beam adjusted for a wide fan.

Amazingly, this will light up the entire room as the light reflects off the ceiling. It is not enough light to read by, but it is enough to see your way through your home without tripping on furniture or walking into a door or wall. Place one in your kitchen and living room. For your bedrooms you can place a penlight stubby LED flashlight on your night stand(s) aiming up at the underside of your lamp shades. Again, this will create the effect that you have a low wattage electrical bulb in your nightstand lamps. Penlight and stubby LED flashlights are inexpensive, have several on hand.



### **Extra Batteries**

Purchase an ample supply of extra batteries for your flashlights. Costco and Walmart offer 12 and 16 packs of AA, C and D batteries. Normally, batteries will have a 4-5 year shelf life. Keep batteries in a cool, dry place at normal room temperature. It is not necessary to store batteries in a refrigerator.

### **Use of Candles (not recommended)**

Candles should only be used as a last resort during a power outage. Candles used without caution pose a fire risk as well as Carbon Monoxide (“CO”) dangers.

Often called the silent killer, CO is an invisible, odorless and colorless gas created when fuels (such as candles, gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane) burn incompletely. Symptoms of CO poisoning include severe headache, dizziness, mental confusion, nausea and faintness.

Due to the small flame, the amount of CO is extremely small and poses no hazard in normal use of a candle.

However, in a tightly closed home with 5 candles or more candles burning over a long time period, not only will the CO build up, CO<sub>2</sub> will also accumulate at the floor level and the Oxygen content of the room will be depleted. If you are going to rely on candles please take the following precautions:

- Use candles only when an adult is present and awake.
- Always remain awake when candles are being burned in a room.
- Keep lighted candles at least one foot from mattresses, curtains or other flammable materials.
- Burn candles where they won't tip or be knocked over, and never place candles in windowsills or near window coverings. This is of special concern after an earthquake where many aftershocks may occur which could cause a candle to tip and start a fire.
- Keep candles out of reach of children and pets.
- Extinguish all candles before going to sleep or leaving a room. A good rule of candle safety is that when you go out, blow it out.
- Never use a candle for light when checking pilot lights or fueling equipment such as a kerosene heater or lanterns, as the flame could ignite flammable vapors.
- In a power outage, it's safer to use flashlights or other light sources generated by batteries.
- If young children live in or visit your home, lock up matches, lighters and other fire tools,
- If a fire occurs in the home, leave the house immediately and call 9-1-1. Make sure your family has an escape plan and knows where to go upon leaving the house.
- Once outside the house, do not go back inside for any reason, even to rescue pets, which are low to the ground and have a good chance to escape on their own.
- Always have a working smoke detector in your home.

## **Fireplace Safety**

Many of us only use our fireplaces on a cold winter evening. If you have a gas log, you can light your fireplace and enjoy the warmth. Be sure to open the flue and as well as the glass doors and close the wire screen on your fireplace. As with candles, you should be concerned that there is no Carbon Monoxide ("CO") buildup in your home.

The purchase and installation of a CO alarm is recommended.

If you choose to burn wood, twigs or synthetic logs (like DuraFlame®), it is recommend that you take the following additional precautions:

- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials. Leave glass fireplace doors open while burning a fire. Leaving the doors open ensures that the fire receives enough air to ensure complete combustion and keeps creosote from building up in the chimney.
- Close glass doors when the fire is out to keep air from the chimney opening from getting into the room. Most glass fireplace doors have a metal mesh screen which should be closed when the glass doors are open. This mesh screen helps keep embers from getting out of the fireplace area.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces that do not have a glass fireplace door.
- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris, especially plastics in your fireplace .
- When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside your home.

## **Refrigerated Foods**

Always keep milk, meat, poultry, fish, and eggs refrigerated at or below 40 °F and frozen food at or below 0 °F. This may be difficult when the power is out.

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain its cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 – 8 hours, if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. After 4 hours, as your freezer warms, you may want to move your most perishable items from the refrigerator to the freezer.

In an extended emergency, prepare and serve your most perishable food items first. Meals may be cooked on with your charcoal, propane or natural gas BBQ. Cook outside, never bring a BBQ into your home or garage for cooking, the accumulation of CO and risk of fire are too great.

For an extended power outage, obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot full freezer for 2 days. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.

## **Emergency Food Supply**

During a power outage you may want to delve into your emergency food supply for snacks or meals. Remember to replenish items that you have consumed after your power is restored. Energy bars, nuts, granola, fruit (fresh or dried) and canned meats (chicken, dried beef and fish) can provide a quick meal. If the power outage is localized in the community, you may want to consider going to a restaurant for your meals.

## **Telephone and Communications**

### Land-Line Telephones

Most modern home telephone systems rely on electrical power to operate. Only older telephones (like the standard AT&T desk and Princess phones) will operate off of the telephone line power. However, if you have Time Warner cable telephone service or Verizon FIOS service, you may experience a disruption of land-line telephone service. Both of these services have battery backup which will maintain service for several hours after the power goes out.

### Cell Phones

Your best means of communication may be your cell phone. However, it is important that you reserve your cell phone battery life for emergency use. Minimize the number of phone calls and the duration of phone calls you make during a power outage. You will not be able to recharge your cell phone from your home charger. It is recommended that you purchase an automobile charger for your cell phone so that you could recharge it from your car battery in an emergency. Most cell phones will operate with a dead battery, while plugged into a charger.

### Radio and Television

If you have a battery powered radio, you can use it to listen to emergency news broadcasts. Don't use your battery powered radio to listen to "talk radio" or music during a power outage unless you have an ample supply of batteries. Alternatively, you can use your car radio to listen to news broadcasts.

Television will generally be unavailable during a power outage unless you have a generator.

### Internet and eMail

If you have a smart phone or a laptop computer with wireless internet service (mobile broadband) you will be able to send and receive eMail and obtain news from the internet.

Be sure to have an automobile power adapter for your laptop computer so you can recharge it as necessary.

## Garage Door Opener

Never run your vehicle's engine in the garage with the garage door closed, this will result in the deadly buildup of carbon monoxide in your garage and vehicle.

When the power goes out, your automatic garage door opener will not function and it will have to be opened manually. Most automatic garage door openers have a red or yellow knob hanging from a string which disengages the garage door from the track of the opener. (See photo to the right.)



Know where garage door emergency release is and how to use it.

When you disengage or release the garage door from the track, you will be able to open the garage door, manually. Depending on the weight of the garage door and its balance, two people may be required to open the door.

It is recommended that you have a step ladder available which you can use to brace the garage door open while you back your vehicle out. Be sure to have someone hold the ladder steady while you are backing out of the garage so the ladder does not tip over. Leave your vehicle outside during a power outage in case you need quick emergency access.

Important: When you disengage your garage door opener, your garage door could be lifted by anyone from the outside unless you re-engage the door on the opener track or provide another type of lock on the door.

## Security Concerns During a Power Outage

Since most alarm systems run over phone lines, during a power outage, your alarm system may be inoperative, and as described above, be unable to communicate with a central monitoring station because of failure of your phone system.

You should take all the precautions that you normally do regarding having your sliding doors and windows locked.

If someone comes to your door and knocks, ask them to identify themselves before you unlock your door.

Approach the door with a flashlight so you can identify the person knocking.

## Other Types of Emergencies

Visit the Desert Breezes Web Site at <http://www.desertbreezesp.com> and click on the **Emergency** button to learn more about how to deal with various types of emergencies.

This information has been prepared in part from the following sources.

Energizer Battery

<http://www.energizer.com/learning-center/battery-care/Pages/dos-and-donts.aspx>

Sarasota County Florida Fire Chief

<http://www.scgov.net>

Marshfield, Massachusetts Fire Chief

[http://www.townofmarshfield.org/Public\\_Documents/MarshfieldMA\\_Fire/carbonmonoxide](http://www.townofmarshfield.org/Public_Documents/MarshfieldMA_Fire/carbonmonoxide)

U.S. Fire Administration – FEMA

[http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/home\\_fire\\_prev/heating/fireplace.shtm](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/heating/fireplace.shtm)

USDA - Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/keeping\\_food\\_safe\\_during\\_an\\_emergency/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/keeping_food_safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp)